Alphacrucis College HDR Program

PhD/DMin/MPhil Research Proposal

<<Title of Thesis>>

<<Name>>

<<Email>>

Supervisors

<name of Principal Supervisor>>

<name/s of Associate supervisors>>

Faculty:

Enrolment Commencement Date:

Proposal Submission Date:

**INSTRUCTIONS – PLEASE DELETE THIS BEFORE SUBMISSION**

* Your proposal must be 15-20 pages, no less, no more. The total word count therefore should be about 7,500 words.
* You must follow this template strictly
* You must use an 11 or 12 point serif font, preferably Cambria or Times New Roman
* You must use the standard margins as setup in this document
* You must use single line spacing
* Where the template has a title in <<TITLE>> format, replace the text entirely with your information
* Use the seven Heading 1 sections below. Headings 2+ will not appear in TOC

**Ideally, this proposal is completed and ready for external review six months into FT candidature and twelve months into PT candidature**

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# 1. Abstract

[no more than 200 words]

The abstract is a brief summary of your Research Proposal, and should be no longer than 200 words. It starts by describing in a few words the knowledge domain where your research takes place and the key issues of that domain that offer opportunities for the scientific or technological innovations you intend to explore. Taking those key issues as a background, you then present briefly your research statement, your proposed research approach, the results you expect to achieve, and the anticipated implications of such results on the advancement of the knowledge domain.

To keep your abstract concise and objective, imagine that you were looking for financial support from someone who is very busy. Suppose that you were to meet that person at an official reception and that she would be willing to listen to you for no more than two minutes. What you would say to that person, and the pleasant style you would adopt in those two demanding minutes, is what you should put in your abstract.

The guidelines provided in this template are meant to be used creatively and not, by any means, as a cookbook recipe for the production of research proposals.

## Keywords

[about 6-10 keywords]

This section is an alphabetically ordered list of the more appropriate words or expressions (up to twelve) that you would introduce in a search engine to find a research proposal identical to yours. The successive keywords are separated by commas.

# 2. Overview of Thesis Proposal & Research Questions

[Recommended: 500 words ~ 1 page]

This section introduces the research project you propose to carry out. It explains the background of the project, focusing briefly on the major issues of its knowledge domain and clarifying why these issues are worthy of attention. *It then proceeds with the concise presentation of the research statement, which can take the form of a hypothesis, a research question, a project statement, or a goal statement*. The research statement should capture both the essence of the project and its delimiting boundaries, and should be followed by a clarification of the extent to which you expect its outcomes to represent an advance in the knowledge domain you have described.

The introduction should endeavour, from the very beginning, to catch the reader’s interest and should be written in a style that can be understood easily by any reader with a general science background. It should cite all relevant references pertaining to the major issues described, and it should close with a brief description of each one of the chapters that follow.

Many authors prefer to postpone writing the Introduction till the rest of the document is finished. This makes a lot of sense, since the act of writing tends to introduces many changes in the plans initially sketched by the writer, so that it is only by the time the whole document is finished that the writer gets a clear view of how to construct an introduction that is, indeed, compelling.

This section must conclude with two to three key research questions. Make sure these questions are not Yes/No (i.e. polar) questions, but rather, are open-ended, such as “In what ways….?”, “To what degree…?” and so forth.

# 3. Literature Review (Abridged)

[Recommended: 2000 words ~ 4-5 pages]

The Literature Reviewserves a cluster of very important aims. First of all, it demonstrates that you have built a solid knowledge of the field where the research is taking place, that you are familiar with the main issues at stake, and that you have critically identified and evaluated the key literature. It also shows that you have created an innovative and coherent view integrating and synthesizing the main aspects of the field, so that you can now put into perspective the new direction that you propose to explore. The Literature Review must give credit to the authors who laid the groundwork for your research, so that when, in the following chapter, your research objectives are further clarified, the reader is able to recognise beyond doubt that what you are attempting to do has not been done in the past and that your research will likely make a significant contribution to the literature.

The Literature Review is a critical part of your research proposal, so it will develop over various paragraphs and sub-paragraphs. It should be accompanied by (fairly) comprehensive references, which you list at the end of the proposal. *Ideally, all the influential books, book chapters, papers and other texts produced in the knowledge domain you are exploring which are of importance for your work should be mentioned here and listed at the end of the proposal.*

You should follow strictly the appropriate referencing conventions of your discipline area and make sure that no document you refer to is missing in the final list of references, nor vice versa. The choice of referencing conventions will depend on the specific field where your research is located.

# 4. Research Methods and Objectives

[Recommended: 2000 ~ 4 pages]

The chapter Research Methods and Objectivesclarifies the research objectives of your project, taking as its background your description of the Literature Review, and describes the methodological approaches you have in mind to address the key research questions of your project as articulated in the Introduction. The clarification of the research objectives should build solidly on the Literature Reviewand relate your research to the work carried out by others. It should elucidate the measure to which your work develops from their work and the extent to which it diverges from theirs to open up new and yet unexplored avenues. In essence, the chapter Research Methods and Objectivesexplains what you plan to do to tackle your research problem, why you plan to do it that way, and how you are going to do it.

The “how to” component of the proposal is found in this section. It should be detailed enough to let the reader decide whether the methods you intend to use are adequate for the research at hand. It should go beyond the mere listing of research tasks, by asserting why you assume that the methods or methodologies you have chosen represent the best available approaches for your project. This means that you should include a discussion of possible alternatives and credible explanations of why your approach is the most valid.

# 5. Work Plan and Timetable

[Recommended 500 words ~ 1-2 pages]

In this section you should provide a schedule for completion of your thesis with proposed deadlines for each major chapter and for submission, assuming you are enrolled either part-time or fulltime (or, a combination if you anticipate changing between the two during the course of studies).

If your research includes data collection, please include in your timetable your submission of the ethics approval and the timelines for data collection and analysis. This often runs concurrently with the writing up of literature review or other sections of your thesis, so you should indicate if this is the case.

Doctoral theses typically require at least three months editing at the end (FT) prior to submission, so make sure your final draft is listed as being ready no later than three months prior to submission.

A critical milestone is confirmation of candidature and this document will be reviewed as part of that process. This normally occurs after six months FT or twelve months PT, so include this as a critical milestone in your timetable.

# 6. Conclusion

[Recommended: 500 words ~ 1 page]

The Conclusionbriefly restates the objectives of your research project, recaps the research approach you plan to follow, and clarifies in a few words what you expect to find out, why it is valuable to find it out, and on what basis you expect to evaluate the validity of your results.

# 7. Reference List

[Recommended: 1500 words ~ 3 pages]

In this section you **must list** all the references you have made throughout the proposal, and you **must not list** any reference that you do not cite.

You must make sure that you comply with the referencing conventions or citation styles that have been established for your specific field.

Increasingly references include digital sources so make sure you reference them correctly, in addition to the traditional sources such as books, book chapters, journal articles, encyclopedia entries, edited books, and so forth.

The fundamental principles of reference lists are as follows:

1. The reader must be able to find for themselves the exact document you yourself read. So for example if you read the third edition of a book in French, that is what you cite. If you read an English translation of the second edition of the same book, you must list that English translation of the second edition and not the third, etc.

2. To provide precise attribution of authorship (and editorship if need be). So for example, if a dictionary entry is written by Jo Smith, and the dictionary itself is edited by Jones and Brown, your entry must be something like:

Smith, Jo. 2015. “Why octopuses have eight legs” in *Dictionary of Obscure Facts* eds. Jones, M & Brown, Volume 8. P. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This is because Jo Smith wrote the article in the 8th volume of a 10 volume Dictionary, edited by Jones and Brown. So Smith is the author and Jones and Brown are the editors who (typically!) contributed to the final version of the article through their editorial work.